

CITIZENSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM THAILAND

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Abstract *This paper considers new perspectives and theories in citizenship, governance and development studies and discusses how these new perspectives, concepts and knowledge are being brought together in a trial citizen education project based in Vajiravudh College in Bangkok¹. It is suggested that multi-dimensional citizenship curriculum offers a remedy for the current fragmentation and inadequacy of studies of development, citizenship, human rights and issues related to globalisation apparent in many countries today, including New Zealand and Thailand.*

The resource units being developed in the Vajiravudh project look at active and involved citizenship, problem solving and decision-making within real or simulated community development contexts, and avoid focusing overtly on poverty and poverty alleviation. Sample units are set out in Appendices 1-3 as exemplars of concepts and decision making which are important in citizenship, human rights and development education.

Education for citizenship and development: changing perceptions

Both citizenship education and development education have been associated with controversy, internationally and within New Zealand. There have been major changes in the perceptions of what constitutes education for effective citizenship and for sustainable development.

Citizenship education has often been equated with indoctrination into authoritarian views on government and ‘morality’, law and loyalty to flag and country. Development education in schools in the sixties and into the seventies was based largely on the “charity model” which assumed “they” [the recipients] needed “our” [the donors] help, ideas and knowledge to “catch up.” This kind of aid helped the donors feel they were “doing something” to alleviate poverty but often ignored the hard questions about what was achieved in such projects, either for the recipients or the donors! In fact the charity model remains a hidden [or not so hidden] agenda within development education just as indoctrination remains an issue in citizenship education. Education materials from aid agencies at the end of the day are designed to win the greatest sympathy and increase the amount of cash in donors envelopes. Good citizenship will for many still equate with loyalty to established institutions, patriotism, the flag and the national anthem.

Multi-dimensional citizenship

We turn to some of the recent discourses on citizenship and development education which have helped inform the project at Vajiravudh College. Issues of responsible citizenship, good governance, social capital, people based or participatory development, economic and social rights, sustainable lifestyles and environments and globalisation, have in the 21st century become equally central to both development and citizenship education

¹ The citizenship education project, “Citizen-World-Citizen,” has been set up by Dr Chai Anan Samudavanija director of Vajiravudh College in Bangkok. The project, begun in 1999, involves a group of teachers, educators and academics and representatives of the Ministry of Education. This paper explores some of the ideas which are emerging as this project unfolds.

The Vajiravudh project has been influenced by the ideas put forward by The Citizenship Education Policy Study Group panel of international experts, supported by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation in Tokyo. Cogan and others in that Study Group have developed the notion of multi-dimensional citizenship education [See Cogan 1998] which fits well with the ideas and intentions of the Vajiravudh project

Cogan defines citizenship in terms of the following attributes:

The attributes of citizenship can be classified into five categories: sense of identity; the enjoyment of certain rights; the fulfillment of corresponding obligations; a degree of interest and involvement in public affairs, and an acceptance of basic societal values.

Cogan argues that multi-dimensional citizenship as he defines it requires the following competencies:

- ◇ *Ability to look at and approach problems as a member of a global society*
- ◇ *Ability to work with others in a co-operative way and to take responsibility for ones roles/duties within society*
- ◇ *Willingness to resolve conflict in a non-violent manner*
- ◇ *Willingness to change ones lifestyle and consumption habits to protect the environment*
- ◇ *Ability to be sensitive towards and to defend human rights [e.g. rights of women, children, ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged]*
- ◇ *Willingness and ability to participate in politics at local national and international levels.*

Cogan and colleagues emphasizes that multi-dimensional citizenship education should infuse the whole atmosphere and purpose of schooling, and extend beyond schools to involve the participation of their communities².

Civil society and citizenship

Chai anan Samudavanija recognises two kinds of politics, electoral politics, the politics of parties and bureaucracies, and citizen politics, the politics of civil society and communities. He argues that in Thailand the political party system has considerable limitations as an expression of popular will. He suggests that a lack transparency and of public involvement in party policy making, along with electoral malpractice such as vote buying makes political parties very imperfect instrument of democracy. Democracy, in his view, lies rather in the movements which can develop within civil society.

Thailand has a wide range of civil society activity, community groups, NGOs environmental groups, human rights organisations, and protest movements, the latter often traveling from far afield to Bangkok, to camp for weeks or even months in the streets and footpaths near parliament to get their cause heard. The Bangkok Post reported there are around 14000 local NGOs in Thailand. A good number of them receive some support from international NGOs and networks - e mails and web-sites proliferate month by month. Many NGOs have an environmental focus.

The resource units being developed in the Vajiravudh citizenship education project reflect Chai anan's distinction between 'electoral politics' and 'citizen politics'. [See Appendices 1-3.] Janoski [1998 p 11] likewise distinguishes between universalistic citizenship rights and obligations at the national level, as prescribed by law,[electoral politics]and group or community initiated actions to interpret and initiate these rights, and the law in their differing situations. [civil society politics] He points out that "strong civil societies produce particular institutional structures [e.g the village banks mentioned above] that bolster

²See the article "Alligators and Swamps..." by Rex Bloomfield which advocates this kind of citizenship education for New Zealand schools and their communities.

citizenship... Weak civil societies will most often be dominated by the state or market spheres.” p15 [See below]

The spheres within which citizenship operates, according to Janoski, are:

- I. The state: the judiciary; the bureaucracy; political parties; the military etc
- II. The public sphere: welfare organisations; religious bodies; NGOs etc.
- III. The market sphere: firms, unions; business associations; co-operatives; village banks
- IV. The private sphere: family, friends; social networks and organisations; clubs

Resource units in the Vajiravudh project are being developed to represent the four spheres within which citizenship operates. In the case of Thailand finding examples of trade unions as part of civil society has been difficult up to this point.

Social capital and reciprocity

Studies within a multi-dimensional citizenship and development education project should represent the concepts of social capital and the effects of low and high trust communities and institutions. Robinson [1997] defines social capital as follows:

Social capital refers to the ‘connectedness’ between citizens. To develop social capital communities requires a high degree of trust, a range of voluntary associations and opportunities to meet and discuss community concerns.

There are many accounts of the ways social capital and trust affect participation in development. [Sirianni 1995, Fukuyama 1995, The World Bank 1997]. A World Bank research project gathered data on the positive effects on household incomes of encouraging the building up social capital in rural Tanzania [World Bank 1997]. The report noted that:

The creation of groups does not by itself create social capital, rather the social capital grows from complex, organic groups formed by participants addressing issues and needs within a social context. Local institutions, which have remained virtually invisible to policy makers and outside organizations, need to be identified and recognized during the planning of social action programs.

Some of the resource units being developed in the Vajiravudh project have students explore the effect of connections and trust within communities or work places. Unfortunately, while the concept of social capital can be explored in resources for students good data on how an increase in social capital is best encouraged, and the effects of such an increase is not widely documented.

The extent of trust within communities and between different groups was apparent in some of the research done for the units. There appeared to be little trust in politicians and bureaucrats, and sometimes even in the law. Electoral politics then [the sphere of the state in Janoski’s analysis above] in Thailand is characterised by a low degree of trust, compared with arguably a higher degree of trust within and between groups in civil society. A number of resource units touch on or raise questions about social capital and trust within communities. As we have noted above, political scientists such as Chai anan Samudavanija have emphasised the role of civil society in strengthening democracy in Thailand

Citizenship, human rights and development

The UN Declaration on the Right to Development [1986] in its preamble speaks of improving the well being of people “on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair

distribution of resulting benefits” UNICEF in Thailand sets as its first measure of human rights for its programmes as “giving the child the right to participate” in society. The Vajiravudh project incorporates units focusing on human rights and obligations as part of the multi-dimensional citizenship approach.

Student knowledge and attitudes

The next phase for the Vajiravudh project is to assess, before and after the studies, student knowledge and attitudes, and their abilities using the kind of problem solving and decision-making skills required of citizens in a globalised world. Studies of senior secondary school students civic knowledge and attitudes have been undertaken by Mellor [1998] and Hahn [1998] who used a questionnaire³ from the 1990s IEA Civics study to assess nine aspects of citizenship education. Most questionnaire items focused on ‘electoral politics’ though a few do deal with civil society. The nine aspects covered were: 1] classroom climate; 2] political experience; 3] political interest; 4] future political activity; 5] political trust; 6] political efficacy; 7] political confidence; 8] equal rights for women; 9] political tolerance [free expression, civic rights]

Mellor, commenting on the responses of her Victorian sample of students, noted that [p 96] “students are personally confident, have supportive classroom climates, experience ‘both sides of the question/issues’, but are disengaged from the political process and are unmotivated to engage in it.... There is an urgent need for a curriculum which empowers young people to feel commitment to their democratic rights, and their role in the decision making process in their communities and governments”

It is the contention of this paper that research is indeed needed on student knowledge and attitudes and problem solving and decision-making skills on matters of human rights governance and participatory development within the context of the multi-dimensional citizenship identified in this paper.

Conclusion

This paper has emphasised the close link between citizenship, governance and development. Current theories of aid, development citizenship governance and human rights are based on largely on a cluster of identical concepts, yet education programmes are commonly devised as if each is a separate area of learning for students and communities. The virtual lack of discussion of governance and citizenship issues at this Devnet conference on development reveals the absence of serious analysis or research on the kinds of connections touched on in this paper. The notion of a multi-dimensional approach to education about citizenship human rights and development has far to go.

³ Mellor and Hahn modified the questionnaire and methodology a little to suit their research sample. Mellor’s sample was Victorian students, Hahn drew her data from students in six European countries.

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Resource Unit: MAKING DECISIONS AND CONSIDERING RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

This unit is about how making decisions and considering consequences :

The ways of individuals make decisions and consider the consequences in an imaginary work place.

The ways different interest groups resolve differences make decisions and about community development.

How both individuals and groups may consider and balance the public good against their own interests when making decisions.

Making decisions

People sometimes make a certain decision because they think the consequences will be good for them personally. Other times they may make decisions that give benefit to others as well as themselves. Probably most decisions citizens make have a mixture of these two – they are good for the individual and are good in some ways for others as well.

The Cannery at Luang Nor [an imaginary story]

This story is about four characters in a fictional story of a fruit cannery in an imaginary town called Luang Nor somewhere in northern Thailand, not too far from the Burmese frontier. Study the stories then work in groups to fill in charts showing what you think the consequences might be for the decisions these people might make.

About 60 people work at this cannery, which cans pineapples and lichis sent to the cannery by the farmers in nearby villages. The farmers association complains about the low prices they get for their fruit, but the nearest market is several hours away, the road is very bad, and it is too expensive to send fruit there. When there is a lot of fruit coming into the cannery and extra workers are needed the manager employs illegal workers from the Burmese side of the border. The Burmese workers are paid less than the locals.

Mr Bhandu is the manager of the cannery.

The cannery owner has told him he will lose his job if the mill doesn't make more profit. Mr Bhandu thinks that one way to make more profit would be to have the workers longer hours each day without paying them more wages. However the workers, with the help of an NGO, are already having meetings about the low pay they get. He could pay the local farmers less for their fruit but the farmers association is already complaining about low prices. He could employ more Burmese workers from across the border who will work for much less pay. The Provincial officials have threatened to fine the cannery if they hear about more illegal workers.

Mr Bhandu, Cannery manager has to decide whether to:

- *Tell the farmers that the cannery will have to pay less for fruit from now on*
- *Reduce the amount paid in wages by employing more Burmese workers*
- *Advise the cannery owner that it would be best to make no changes at this time.*

In your group do consequences charts for each of these decisions and then decide which decision he actually makes

Mr Petchaburi is the owner of the cannery

Mr Petchaburi lives in Bangkok. He has several canneries but these days none of them are doing very well. He needs money to buy computers to help him run his canneries efficiently, and more safely, but the banks will not lend him any more money. He has to make more profit from his canneries to get his computers. As a businessman it might be better to close the least profitable canneries, such as the one at Luang Nor.

However as a Member of Parliament he remembers that up until now most of the people of the villages around Luang Nor have voted for him.

This year is election year. He knows about the workers complaints at the cannery. He also has heard that for the first time the local kamnan has invited an opposition political candidate to come to a meeting in the village.

Mr Petchaburi Cannery owner. He has to decide whether to:

- *Close the cannery*
- *Offer to meet the workers to discuss pay, and also ask them to vote for him*
- *Meet with Lon Nueng and offer him the managers job if he can encourage the workers to vote for him.*

In your group do consequences charts for each of these decisions and then decide which decision he actually makes

Mr Lon Nueng is a leader among workers at the cannery

Lon Lueng has become a leader of workers in the cannery. Last year he invited an NGO from the provincial capital to come and help them discuss with the manager how to make the cannery safer after two workers were badly burnt by an explosion of hot steam. At that time he also organised meetings of the workers about their low pay.

Some are saying that Lon Nueng doesn't want to organize meetings any more. They say that the cannery paid for the new house he has just built to keep him quiet. He has recently reminded the workers that if they seek more pay cheaper Burmese workers might be brought to work at the cannery.

Mr Lon Nueng The leader of the workers. He has to decide whether to:

- *Invite the NGO people back again to meet with the workers and the farmers association*
- *Meet with the owner, Mr Petchaburi, and ask for the managers job*
- *Keep quiet, and arrange no more meetings just now.*

In your group do consequences charts for each of these decisions and then decide which decision he actually makes

Mr Somwung is a foreman at the cannery,

Mr Somwung is also a village headman and quite a wealthy farmer who sells a lot of lichis to the cannery. He is known as a fair and just man who has a good way of solving village problems through discussion. He is a foreman at the cannery. Some people have recently been complaining that Somwung often seems on the side of the manager in the recent disputes at the cannery. Somwung is a good Buddhist who has done much to help the wat. He is feeling disappointed about the attitude of some of the workers. He is considering leaving his job to do more voluntary work around the wat.

Mr Somwung Foreman and farmer. He has to decide whether to:

- *Meet with Mr Petchaburi to say he will support him in the election*
- *Leave his job at the cannery immediately.*
- *Meet with Mr Petchaburi to say he would like the manager's job.*

In your group do consequences charts for each of these decisions and then decide which decision he actually makes

Future Scenarios: a role play

A year or two later the cannery is closed anyway because it is too small to use modern technology. However Mr Petchaburi, who was re-elected to parliament, arranges for the road into Luang Nor to be much improved. He calls a meeting of people in the district to hear their ideas about the possible futures of the district now it has a good road- but no cannery? He says that some funding is available from the

provincial government to help the district now the cannery is closed. The local community however must meet and agree on five projects which will be of most benefit and list them in order of priority. They must give reasons why each project is on the list.

Role play that meeting.

- Elect one of the four people in the story above as chairperson.
- Form the following groups: farmers; families with children of secondary school age who need a school bus service; people wanting to get into tourism as guest house owners or guides; craftspeople; people wanting help to set up a village bank [credit union]
- The groups meet to decide what projects they want and how they can persuade the meeting to back their projects. [Use the consequences/benefits chart for group decisions below]
- All groups attend a meeting in the Luang Nor wat to [Several monks there have been involved in community development in other parts of Thailand.]

Decisions & consequences chart for Mr _____

You might need more than four consequences boxes on your chart.

Decision Should I

After you have filled in the consequences boxes for this decision tick one

Yes I will do this

or

No I wont do this

Consequence 1

Consequence 2

Consequence 3

Consequence 4

Decisions & consequences chart for a group _____

[Farmers, tourist operators, parents etc

You might need more than four consequences boxes on your chart.

Decision Our group suggest the community should decide to ----

Because -----

After you have filled in the consequences boxes for this decision tick one

Yes I will do this

or

No I wont do this

Consequence 1

Consequence 2

Consequence 3

Consequence 4

For reflection and discussion:

Which of the following concepts important in education about development, human rights and responsible citizenship could be developed from the activities set out above?

#Balancing ones own or group needs against the needs of the community

Social capital building.i.e activities which build up networks and trust between individuals and groups

Working with others in co-operative ways; resolving conflicts

Balancing the public good against self interest

Making judgments about sustainable development and changing futures

Recognizing people's economic and social rights and rights to development